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Articles in Today's Clips

Wednesday, June 4, 2008

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Wednesday, June 4, 2008

Detroit

Warren man faces federal child exploitation charges

Indictment alleges he taped sexual abuse of girl, 5; feds say child porn inquiry has netted 37 other Mich. leads.

Paul Egan / The Detroit News

DETROIT -- Records of overseas companies that provided child pornography to paid subscribers helped catch a Warren man who allegedly sexually abused a 5-year-old girl and also have provided leads on 37 other possible Michigan offenders, officials said Tuesday.

Bryan Brown, 36, a Warren construction worker, is expected to appear in U.S. District Court in Detroit this week after he was charged with sexual exploitation of a child and possession of child pornography in a grand jury indictment unsealed Monday.

Brown, who is accused of videotaping his sexual abuse of a 5-year-old girl over nearly a one-year period until April, is already in custody on related state charges brought by the Warren Police Department. Officials said he could face 25 to 50 years in prison if convicted on the federal charges.

Brian Moskowitz, special agent in charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of Investigations in Detroit, said his agency and Warren Police had independently opened investigations related to Brown.

Brown, who has a child sex conviction in Indiana from 1997, had been identified as a paid subscriber to a provider of child pornography based overseas, Moskowitz said at a news conference.

It's not a given that consumers of child pornography are also sexual abusers of children, he said.

However, "we do see a significant number of our cases that start out as child pornography cases where, once we investigate, we find out there has been sexual abuse," Moskowitz said. "That's what happened in this case."

ICE officials said in a separate criminal complaint recently filed in Detroit that the agency has two investigations, "Operation Emissary" and "Project Flicker," related to pay-to-subscribe child pornography Web sites.

Investigations of overseas child porn sites have led to 37 Michigan leads, Moskowitz said.

U.S. Attorney Stephen Murphy said sexual exploitation charges brought by his office have increased

sharply since 2006.

His office launched its Child Protection Initiative midway through that year.

There were 25 federal child exploitation charges brought in Detroit in 2006, 46 in 2007, and about 20 through the first five months of 2008, officials said.

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Find this article at:

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Man accused of raping Pontiac girl faces trial

BY KORIE WIKINS • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • JUNE 4, 2008

A homeless man will stand trial on felony charges after police say he raped an 11-year-old girl. Kevin Bernard Meredith, 47, was in 50th District Court in Pontiac on Tuesday for a hearing. He will stand trial in the coming months on charges of kidnapping, indecent exposure and first-degree criminal sexual conduct. If convicted, he could face up to life in prison.

Police say that on May 18, the girl was at a relative's home when she left to go play at a nearby park in Pontiac. She was approached by Meredith, who led her into an abandoned home on the 100 block of Edison. He then let the girl go and she told relatives she'd been raped, police say. A witness saw Meredith with the girl near the home, police say. Officers went to the abandoned home and found Meredith. On May 19, he was charged and remains in custody on a \$100,000 bond.

WARREN

Man indicted on charges of sex acts with girl, 5

BY DAVID ASHENFELTER • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • June 4, 2008

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A 36-year-old Warren man who spent four years in prison for molesting three girls in suburban Chicago has been indicted in Detroit on charges of sexually exploiting a 5-year-old girl, U.S. Attorney Stephen Murphy III announced Tuesday.

ADVERTISEMENT

Murphy, flanked by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials and two Warren police detectives, announced the indictment of Bryan Brown, who allegedly videotaped sex acts with the unidentified, unrelated girl between June 2007 and April 2008.

Brown, a construction worker, pleaded guilty in 1999 to molesting three girls at a gymnastics club in suburban Chicago where he was an instructor, authorities said. He was released in 2003.

Brown, who is to be arraigned next week in U.S. District Court on the federal charges, faces criminal sexual conduct charges in Macomb County and is in custody, Murphy said.

Brown came under suspicion because of his arrest in April on a marijuana charge. Federal authorities also were investigating him for allegedly subscribing to child pornography Web sites, officials said.

If convicted under federal law, Brown could face up to 50 years in prison because of his prior conviction, authorities said.

Last year, Murphy said, his office charged 65 people under federal law with sexually exploiting children.

"These cases are some of the most gut-wrenching and disturbing cases we see in federal court," Murphy said.

Contact **DAVID ASHENFELTER** at dashenfelter@freepress.com.

Foster care worker pleads guilty to rushing paperwork through

BY ZLATI MEYER • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • JUNE 3, 2008

A foster-care consultant for the state Department of Human Services has pleaded guilty to charges that she offered to rush would-be foster parents' paperwork through for an extra \$4,000 using documents she'd forged, the Michigan attorney general announced today.

Savanah Woods, 53, of Southfield, admitted to one count of forgery, a 14-year felony, and one count of misconduct in office, a five-year felony, in exchange for a \$15,000 fine and five years of probation, according to Attorney General Mike Cox. She was originally charged with one count of conducting a criminal enterprise and three counts each of a public officer accepting bribes, misconduct in office and forgery.

The adult foster-care consultant's job included making sure licensees, including government-operated facilities, complied with licensing requirements, Cox explained. Woods' \$4,000 consulting fee got foster care applications approved in as little as one week, instead of the usual six to 12 months, because she approved submissions accompanied by counterfeit documents she'd produced.

"This is a dereliction of duty and a terrible burden on good people trying to become foster parents," Cox said in a statement.

Gongwer News Service

REPORT NO. 107, VOLUME 47-- TUESDAY, JUNE 3 2008

SENATE PANEL DEBATES MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD PORN

A bill before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday that would legally require computer technicians to report child pornography they come across on computers brought debate from the panel about whether it makes sense to ask untrained eyes to catch obscenity and whether to turn those who don't report pornography into criminals.

[Sen. Hansen Clarke](#) (D-Detroit) said that he supports the concept of [SB 1328](#), which is to catch more potential child predators and deviants, but he isn't comfortable including the 93 days in jail and/or \$500 misdemeanor sentence in the legislation.

Instead, he said, he'd rather find a way to encourage technicians who suspect they have encountered child pornography to turn the computer over to law enforcement.

[Sen. Bruce Patterson](#) (R-Canton) said it would be difficult to prosecute such a case and prove that the technician "had knowledge of or observed the pornography" as the bill requires.

Mr. Patterson also questioned whether it makes sense to ask a technician who isn't trained in detecting pornography to make that call upon viewing a person's computer once without any other context.

Further, he wondered, how useful would the bill be if pornographers got word of it and simply changed their file names to less obvious titles, since file names are usually all that technicians see.

Dan Adams, a detective from of the Grand Rapids law enforcement agency responsible for catching child pornographers, said that people who collect pornography are "stupid" enough to continue to use the same file names, evidenced by those who have been caught several times with obvious titles that state blatantly what a picture shows.

As to Mr. Patterson's question about asking technicians to detect pornography, Mr. Adams said he would equate this law with the Child Protection Law, which requires mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse by teachers, nurses, clergy and others.

Some of those people aren't trained but because of their close relationships with children, asking them to report suspicious incidents is law enforcement's best chance at finding out about abuse, he said.

There's a similar argument behind requiring computer technicians to turn people in, which may be the only people to see evidence aside from family.

Mr. Adams added that this law would not only likely catch more pornographers but would lead to the prevention of molestations or arrests of molesters, since studies show that as many as 73 percent of child pornographers have also had physical contact with a child.

Dan Tomaszewski, from Computer HouseCalls, also testified in support of the legislation, saying that even though technicians aren't trained, they could likely identify child pornography on a computer.

He added that the bill doesn't require technicians to search for the materials or even to verify their contents, only to report their suspicions upon running across something that doesn't appear legal.

"There's more good in making this law than there is bad," he said.

But [Sen. Gretchen Whitmer](#) (D-East Lansing) said that just because the Legislature passes a law, doesn't mean that everyone would follow it.

She questioned how many technicians would even know that they were bound to report the material. Further, she said, the bill doesn't contain a time limit for reporting like the Child Protection Act's 72-hours, which she said it should have.

"(The legislation) has a good premise but it has a lot of flaws," Ms. Whitmer said.

The panel plans to take up the issue again in future meetings.

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP: Woman denies hosting teen drinking party

A Washington Township woman is free on bond after pleading not guilty to misdemeanor charges that she hosted an underage drinking party for at least 25 teenagers.

Kimberly Ann Wolfe-Lopinski, 43, was charged in Romeo's 42-1 District Court with 11 counts of contributing to the delinquency of a minor and one count of alcohol consumption by a minor.

Twelve teens also will be charged with underage drinking, Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said.

When deputies reached the woman's home on Broadmoor Circle on May 25, partygoers scattered, but deputies were able to track down 14 teens, 12 of whom had alcohol in their systems, Hackel said.

The range of the teens' blood-alcohol content was between 0.02% and 0.11%. An adult motorist whose level is 0.08% or higher can be convicted of drunken driving. Michigan's legal drinking age is 21.

All but one of the teens were 16 or younger and will be charged in juvenile court. The 17-year-old will be charged as an adult.



James Franklin not first patient to wander away from Clare Bridge of Grand Blanc care facility

Posted by Bryn Mickle | The Flint Journal June 03, 2008 22:23PM

GRAND BLANC TWP., Michigan -- James B. Franklin Jr. isn't the first resident to crawl out of a window at the Clare Bridge of Grand Blanc care facility and disappear.

But unlike the woman who did the same thing in September and was found a short time later, the 75-year-old Alzheimer's patient is still missing -- nearly two weeks after he left the Baldwin Road facility on May 23.

Franklin left the facility just hours after his children had taken him there because his dementia made it too difficult for him to manage on his own.

Franklin's son, James Franklin III, said he went to drop some clothing off about 7 p.m. -- five hours after his father had checked in -- but said he was told that his father wasn't in his room and was getting acclimated to his new surroundings.

"I didn't want to get him excited," said Franklin, who had noticed a screen missing from one of the windows before he left but didn't think much of it.

Ninety minutes later, he got a call that his father was missing.

A staff member reported seeing Franklin at 7:30 p.m., but still he may have had as much as a 45-minute head start before workers at the home

Have you seen this man?

- James B. Franklin Jr. has been missing since May 23 when he walked away from the Clare Bridge of Grand Blanc care facility on Baldwin Road in Grand Blanc Township.
- Franklin is about 5 foot 8, 170 pounds and was wearing blue jeans and a dark jacket. He may have been wearing glasses, police said.
- He may have been headed for Flint and anyone with information is asked to

discovered he was gone about 8:15 p.m. when they couldn't find him for a scheduled medication, said Matt Fontana, a spokesman for Brookdale Senior Living, the Nashville-based company that operates Clare Bridge.

call 911 or township police at (810) 424-2611.

It appears he left through another resident's window, but Fontana said they are unsure how he managed to get out because the windows have special stops that only allow them to open five inches. The doors in the facility are alarmed.

Clare Bridge was investigated by the state last year after a similar episode involving a resident who left through a window.

In the September incident, a neighbor found a woman wandering near her home and brought her back to the facility unharmed. In that instance, the window was pushed all the way to the top, according to a report by the state Department of Human Services.

Staffers later found that five other windows there could also be opened wider than others and had them fitted with stoppers, according to the report.

The state found the home in violation of state regulations and ordered Clare Bridge to submit a corrective action plan.

Fontana said he was unaware of the September incident but said all windows at the facility are being assessed for security. The company issued a statement saying staff at Clare Bridge are "distressed" by Franklin's disappearance.

Stacie Fishell, program coordinator for the Midland-based Alzheimer's Association, said there are no statistics to show how many people with Alzheimer's wander away each year. Some are found within minutes or hours, she said.

Still, the hopes of finding an Alzheimer's patient alive decrease the longer they are missing -- although there are stories of people traveling cross-country before they are found.

"Anything is possible," said Fishell.

Often, it is difficult to spot lost Alzheimer's patients, she said.

"They don't look lost," said Fishell. "They look like they're going someplace with a purpose."

After Franklin's disappearance, police and firefighters spent the night fruitlessly combing the area with the help of a helicopter.

Since then, police have gotten sporadic tips of sightings but none have panned out.

"It seems like we're always two steps behind him," said Grand Blanc Township police Detective Scott Rust.

There has been no activity on his bank account, he doesn't have his wallet and his son doesn't think he had any money on him.

This isn't the first time Franklin has walked off, said his son.

Although family members began noticing odd behavior about three years ago, Franklin wasn't officially diagnosed with Alzheimer's until January when he walked away from his Flint church on a cold Sunday morning and was found the next morning miles away in Mt. Morris Township.

He resisted treatment and stayed with a friend after that episode, but as his mental state worsened his family decided to put him in Clare Bridge.

Apart from confusion, Franklin said his father is "fit as a fiddle."

Franklin believes his father may have left Clare Bridge hoping to return to Flint.

After 20 years in the Air Force where Franklin said his father became friends with Sherman Hemsley of "The Jeffersons" fame, Franklin Jr. worked as car hauler and drove a fuel gas truck in Flint.

But his biggest claim to fame was as the owner of Franklin's Mini Mart at Pasadena and Fleming where customers could see photos of Franklin and Hemsley together.

"He had the coldest beer and wine in town," said his son.

Franklin hopes that someone will recognize his father and call police.

"We're just trying to stay vigilant and hopeful," said Franklin.

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Monday, June 2, 2008

Oakland County

Forum seeks to reduce student dropouts

Shawn D. Lewis / The Detroit News

ROYAL OAK -- Student dropout rates are increasing across Michigan, and Oakland County is no exception.

In an attempt to stem the number of students lagging behind their classmates, and possibly headed toward dropping out, a forum will be held today. It will provide Oakland County students a platform to offer suggestions on how to keep them engaged in the education process.

The Center for Educational Performance and Information says Michigan's dropout rate is 3.8 percent, while in Oakland County, it is slightly lower at 2.8 percent.

"Quite frankly, it is not getting any easier to grow up in our region, our state or our nation," said Royal Oak Schools Superintendent Thomas Moline. "Poverty, divorce, little caring and little guidance are major hurdles some of today's children have to contend with."

Moline said there is no such thing as a bad or failing child. "But there are children who have not had the most basic of supports to begin to feel loved and, in turn, to begin to feel confident," he said.

Some of that confidence will be displayed from 9:30 a.m. to noon today when at-risk students address policymakers at Churchill Community Education Center, 707 Girard in Royal Oak. They are the students who are lagging behind their peers and lacking academic credits, or who have dropped out of high school.

"We hear all the time from students that what they're really looking for is relationships with teachers who seem to care whether they're passing or slipping in their grades, and they're having a hard time trying to find that relationship," said Michele Corey, director of communications for Michigan's Children -- a statewide, independent advocate for children and one of the forum's sponsors.

"We know there are some alternative high schools and some high schools that are finding new ways to use social workers and counselors for relationship building, and they're seeing a difference."

Other organizations participating in the forum are Oakland Schools, the State Shared Youth Vision Partnership, Royal Oak Schools, Common Ground Sanctuary and Oakland Schools.

You can reach Shawn D. Lewis at (248) 64708825 or slewis@detnews.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080602/SCHOOLS/806020342>

DPS graduation rate up, but still worst among big cities

More teens in Michigan — and in Detroit — are getting high school diplomas, according to a report released today. But even though the graduation rate in Detroit Public Schools rose significantly — from the 24.9% reported last year to 37.5% reported this year — the district still had the worst graduation rate of the 50 largest districts in the country. Michigan had the lowest graduation rate for African American male students, and rates were also low for most other ethnic minorities — both in Michigan and across the nation — according to the research center at Editorial Projects in Education, the Bethesda, Md., nonprofit that publishes the journal Education Week.

The state's overall graduation rate was 70.5%, up from 69.1% reported last year. The national rate improved from 69.9% to 70.6%. The graduation rates released today are based on Class of 2005 data. The report noted that a projected 1.23 million students nationwide will fail to graduate on time this school year. The Education Week report, which is issued annually, is often criticized because it uses a formula that doesn't account for mobility. That can have some students who transferred to a private school or out of state counted as dropouts. By Michigan's formula, the state's official graduation rate for the Class of 2005 was 87.7%. For the Detroit district, the state lists a graduation rate of 67.9%. Graduation rates for states vary widely based on how the numbers are crunched. This summer, state officials will release graduation data using a new formula, one they say will more accurately reflect what's happening in schools. Michigan's new formula is consistent with what the U.S. Department of Education has proposed all states use by 2012.

Loss of funding threatens after-school program that serves 450 in Kalamazoo Public Schools

Posted by

[aholcomb](#) June 04, 2008 11:30AM



Jennifer Harnish |

Kalamazoo GazetteChyahir Lewis, 6, DeAndre Reason, 8, and D'America Babbitt, 8, decorate bags Tuesday during an after-school program at Lincoln International Studies School conducted through Kalamazoo Communities in Schools. The after-school program's future is now in jeopardy because it lost its grant funding.

KALAMAZOO -- The future of an after-school program that serves about 450 students in Kalamazoo Public Schools is being threatened by the loss of its grant funding.

Kalamazoo Communities in Schools, which administers the program, learned late last week that the Michigan Department of Education did not choose its applications for the five-year funding cycle that starts in 2008-09.

State officials said the process was "very competitive," and only 24 of 74 applications were funded.

KCIS officials said they're now scrambling to find another funding source by fall to keep the program operating.

"We have some level of confidence that we can find some way to replace that money," said Pam Kingery, KCIS executive director.

Communities in Schools has been receiving \$600,000 a year for the past five years to run 21st Century Community Learning Centers at four sites -- Lincoln, Northglade and Milwood elementaries and Milwood Magnet School, which houses grades six through eight. The funding comes from the federal government as part of No Child Left Behind and is allocated by the state for after-school programming in high-poverty schools.

It was the largest grant administrated by KCIS, a nonprofit that coordinates support services for the district.

The timing for KCIS is not good. Two weeks ago, the agency kicked off the public portion of a \$2.7 million capital campaign to fund its operations for the next three years.

The grant represents almost a third of KCIS's operating budget, and it covers salaries for full-time site coordinators at each school, a part-time program assistant and 45 part-time employees who work directly with the children.

KCIS submitted three proposals to the state: one for keeping the current elementary sites, one for expanding the middle school programming to Hillside and Maple Street middle schools, and another for a program at Kalamazoo Central High School.

"We were a little stunned" at the rejections, said Marc Meulman, project director for KCIS. "I don't think anybody expected all three grants would be denied."

David Head, spokesman for the Michigan Department of Education, said each application was scored based on the effectiveness of the program and the need of the targeted population.

He said KCIS was not the only agency that lost funding for an existing program, and he attributed that to stiff competition.

"You could have been doing a great job, but a lot of people applied," he said. "I know the scores were very close (for all the applicants), but they had to choose a cutoff, and there was only so much money to go around."

Kingery and Meulman said they have not been given a specific reason why the KCIS applications didn't make the cut. "We thought we submitted very strong applications," Kingery said. "Even with four sites, we don't have enough space for kids."

The KCIS program offer two hours of daily programming immediately after school and offers a range of activities, from tutoring to arts and crafts. Outside organizations such as Young Chefs Academy, Prevention Works, the West Michigan Glass Society and a local martial-arts studio also have provided activities.

Contact Julie Mack at jmack@kalamazoogazette.com or 388-8578.

Categories: [Education](#), [Top Photos](#)

Comments

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June 4, 2008

More uninsured turn to 2-1-1 for help

Elizabeth Huff
The Enquirer

People without health insurance are starting to get the message they can call 2-1-1, a health and human services hotline, when they don't know where to go for medical assistance.

Since the Connecting Calhoun County campaign officially began May 2, the Volunteer Center of Battle Creek has seen about an 11 percent increase in the number of health-related requests at its call center.

"The whole initiative hasn't even rolled out yet," Volunteer Center Executive Director Jim Pearl said. "But I'm thrilled that people are getting the message."

About 23,000 people in Calhoun County are uninsured, but an estimated 30 percent of them — almost 7,000 people — might already qualify for existing state and federal programs.

The call center made 137 referrals for health-related requests in May, compared to 123 referrals made in April before the campaign to cover the uninsured began. The numbers include requests for specific needs, such as glasses or prescriptions.

They were not able to meet the health-related needs of 19 callers, Volunteer Center Program Director Kari Marciniak said.

Pearl said call center specialists only refer people to programs they qualify for and have the capacity to handle their needs.

"We do our best to communicate with different agencies and programs with what is available," Pearl said. "We may not be able to meet all their needs, but we want them to take the next step to see if there are resources available."

Call center specialists made 49 more referrals for available health insurance programs in May than in April. Programs include Medicaid and Calhoun Health Plan's Plan B.

Joan LaRock of Bedford Township was surprised to find out she qualified for low-cost health insurance through Calhoun Health Plan and said she has been signed up for about four months.

Two years ago, LaRock, 63, quit her job unloading trucks at Meijer because she had difficulty breathing, and so lost her health insurance. She crossed her fingers, waiting to turn 65 so she could get Medicare. But when she developed cataracts recently that would require expensive surgery to correct, her daughter-in-law urged her to call 2-1-1.

"(I was) just hoping I wouldn't get sick," LaRock said. "It just got so bad and then I said, 'OK, I'll call.'"

Although most callers in May requested assistance for adults, the campaign leaders hope to see more children signed up with existing state- and federally-funded health insurance programs like MIChild and Healthy Kids.

"Before we continue to expand (access to care) and continue to ask people to do more and more, we need to make sure we are using the federal and state resources that are already out there," said Jill Wise, Regional Health Alliance health consultant for the Battle Creek Community Foundation and a campaign co-chair.

Wise said the increase in calls is encouraging considering the campaign has barely started.

Through the end of the year a series billboards, public service announcements, paid and earned ads will be published, Wise said. Enrollment specialists from local health agencies will begin signing up families at local zoos, libraries and festivals who qualify for local, state and federal health insurance programs.

The ultimate campaign goal is to educate county residents that, even if they have insurance now, they'll know who to call if they don't have insurance someday, Wise said.

Elizabeth Huff can be reached at 966-0684 or ehuff@battlecr.gannett.com.

Gongwer News Service

REPORT NO. 107, VOLUME 47-- TUESDAY, JUNE 3 2008

REPORT RANKS STATE AMONG TOPS FOR CHILD HEALTHCARE

Michigan is one of the best states in the nation for providing access to healthcare to children, according to a report released Tuesday. And it ranks in the top 13 on overall child healthcare measures.

The report, U.S. Variations in Child Health System Performance: A State Scorecard (http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=687113) by the Commonwealth Fund, ranked Michigan 3rd for access to care for children. The state ranked 12th for overall performance, 15th for quality and 17th for equity.

Among the key findings is that Michigan has the lowest rate of uninsured children at 5.2 percent. The report said access to healthcare generally correlates to quality of healthcare services.

"We are proud and pleased that Michigan's health care system for children ranks among the best in the country," said Community Health Director Janet Olszewski. "Investing in our children's health is a top priority because they are our future leaders. While we still have plenty of work to do and there is always room for improvement, the results of this report are very encouraging."

Iowa ranked first among the states based on the 13 measures used in the report.



June 4, 2008

More Massachusetts residents insured, paying less

A year ago, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to require residents to obtain health insurance or face a financial penalty.

A review of the law's first year offers some healthy signs: The number of uninsured working-age adults in the state has dropped from 13 percent to 7 percent, and residents are paying less for expenses related to their health care.

Of course, the 97,000 Massachusetts residents who could afford health insurance but failed to obtain it probably are not happy about forfeiting their personal tax exemption of \$219. Another 62,000 who don't earn enough to afford health coverage didn't have to pay the penalty, but they still are uninsured, despite creation of a subsidized health care program for those who earn less than three times the federal poverty level.

So while approximately 5 percent of Massachusetts taxpayers, or about 159,000, remain without health insurance, nearly 350,000 others joined the ranks of the insured over the past year.

Researchers from the Urban Institute conducted the study, which was reported in the journal Health Affairs.

They found that the share of adults paying more than \$500 for out-of-pocket medical expenses over the past year dropped by 4 percent. The number of low-income adults paying more than \$3,000 in out-of-pocket expenses declined by 8 percent.

Under the new system, low-income adults were more likely to have access to health care when they were sick and were more likely to visit a doctor for preventive care and go for dental care, the report said.

But not all the news is good: Researchers found no decline in the use of hospital emergency rooms for non-emergency care, and the cost of the program, estimated a year ago to be \$725 million for its first year, is likely to be close to \$900 million.

But we think the Massachusetts plan has made impressive strides during its first year in increasing the number of people with health care and helping them to deal with their medical expenses. The fact that 71 percent of working-age adults in Massachusetts support the new law indicates the potential political muscle to continue funding the program.

In the meantime, both Congress and other states might take note of the progress being made in Massachusetts and find ways to replicate it.

The new Depression
by News Hits staff
6/4/2008

You know things are getting bad when legislators start drafting new bills modeled on laws originally enacted as a way to help people survive the Great Depression.

But that's the spot we're now finding ourselves in when it comes to the issue of home foreclosures. According to one published report, more than 41,000 Wayne County homes were involved in some aspect of the foreclosure process last year alone. Which is why the group Moratorium Now! (an offshoot of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice) is working with state Sen. Hansen Clarke (D-Detroit) to help pass SB 1306, which would place a two-year moratorium on home foreclosures.

If signed into law, the bill would allow homeowners faced with foreclosure to obtain a court-mandated stay that would allow them to keep their home for two years. It doesn't mean people could keep living in the houses for free; a judge would determine "reasonable" monthly payments based, in part, on the homeowner's income. That's according to attorney **Jerry Goldberg**, who is active in Moratorium Now!

"It is modeled on a law from the 1930s," says Goldberg about Clarke's bill, which has been sent to the Senate's Committee on Banking and Financial Institutions. The previous legislation — enacted in 25 states — provided Depression-era homeowners with a five-year cushion protecting them from eviction. Opponents fought it all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled the law to be constitutional.

Basically, explains Goldberg, the court ruled that peoples' right to survive during times of economic crisis supersedes contractual agreements.

News Hits gets a cold chill imagining how a Supreme Court that has right-wingers like **Clarence Thomas**, **Sam Alito**, **Antonin Scalia** and **John Roberts** might rule if such a case again makes it to the high court.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. First, the new law has to make it through the Legislature and past Gov. **Jennifer Granholm**'s desk. Two upcoming events are intended to help make that happen. First is a march being held at 4 p.m. this Friday, June 6, in downtown Detroit. It will begin in front of the Spirit of Detroit statue outside the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center and proceed up Woodward Avenue to Campus Martius.

The following week, on Saturday, June 14, there will be a town hall meeting in Detroit on the issue. It will be held 2-4 p.m. at UAW Local 7, 2600 Conner Ave. There will also be a legal clinic providing free advice to those facing foreclosure and eviction. To obtain more information about either event phone 313-964-5813 or go to the website moratorium-mi.org.

News Hits is edited by Curt Guyette. Contact him at 313-202-8004 or NewsHits@metrotimes.com.



Legislature must quit stalling parenting bill

EDITORIAL

A bill that exemplifies many traditionally American values - such as fair play, equal rights and family - is being held up in the state Legislature for all the wrong reasons.

House Bill 4564 sits in the House Judiciary Committee, chaired by Southfield Democrat Rep. Paul Condino. It doesn't appear to be going anywhere, and that's a shame. The bill is really an attempt to correct an injustice that has existed in our nation for decades.

The bill sets into law a reasonable request - it calls for equal parenting time for fit parents.

It was proposed by state Rep. Glenn Steil, R-Cascade, and introduced with the support of Reps. Fran Amos, R-Waterford Township; Marty Knollenberg, R-Troy; John Stakoe, R-Highland Township; James Marleau, R-Lake Orion; and 18 other representatives.

It's a shame a bill like this is needed. Historically, fathers have been on the short end in court cases involving custody and visitation when the parents divorce.

The best interest of the child should always be the top priority, but too often that leaves fathers out of the equation.

Judges have expressed concern that the bill may take away some of their judicial discretion.

In fact, among the two groups that oppose the bill are the Michigan National Organization for Women and the State Bar of Michigan, which have submitted arguments against it, saying mandatory joint custody takes discretion away from the judge and also may not be in the best interest of the child.

But we believe the excuse is weak.

We can't understand why these groups would oppose the bills.

If we didn't know any better, we'd say the bar association was more concerned about maintaining long custodial court battles and the high attorney fees that accompany them.

As for NOW, we thought it was an equal rights organization, but it appears

the only "equal rights" they're concerned about is for women. True, women should be their primary concern, but you would think that they would favor what's fair for everyone.

Reverse discrimination and winning your rights at the expense of someone else is a biased, self-righteous and selfcentered position to take.

Here, the prejudice is against fathers and their rights.

We're all for judicial discretion, but someone has to stand up for the rights of fathers, those who are fit and more than willing to share parenting duties.

Our courts say they are doing this now, but judges admit that in the past, the tendency has been to side with the mother, giving her more custodial and/or visitation benefits.

If the courts are truly doing this now, then why do so many fathers and their supporters feel the need for this legislation?

We think anything that helps good fathers stay "good dads" is worth passing. If the law has to be tweaked so that some judges don't feel so put upon, then make the necessary changes.

But it's also time the state Legislature stood up for fathers. Dads have some rights, too.

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State Employee Pleads Guilty to Forgery and Misconduct in Office

June 3, 2008

LANSING – Attorney General Mike Cox announced today that Ms. Savannah Woods, 53, a resident of Southfield, will plead guilty to the charges of Forgery and Misconduct in Office.

Ms. Woods worked as an Adult Foster Care Consultant P11/Licensing Consultant for the Department of Human Services, Office of Children & Adult Licensing. One of her most important duties was to maintain an unbiased regulatory supervision of licensees, including governmentally operated facilities, to ensure ongoing compliance with licensing requirements.

It was determined that Ms. Woods would approach potential foster care applicants and offer them her "consulting services" for a fee of \$4,000. Her private "consulting services" mirrored the duties she was supposed to provide for free on behalf of the State of Michigan. After collecting the fee of \$4,000, Ms. Woods would expedite these applicants' foster care applications. Applications that normally took 6-12 months to approve were approved in less than two months and in some instances as little as one week. In order to expedite these applications, Ms. Woods counterfeited and forged documents such as certificates of compliance. These documents were eventually turned back in -- to Ms. Woods -- who knowingly accepted and approved the application(s).

"This is a dereliction of duty and a terrible burden on good people trying to become foster parents," Cox said. "This sentence sends a signal that this type of behavior will not be tolerated."

The actions of Ms. Woods were first discovered by the Office of Inspector General. The Inspector General and the Office of the Attorney General cooperated in the investigation of Ms. Woods.

Ms. Woods pled guilty to one count of Forgery (14-year felony) and one count of Misconduct in Office (5-year felony). She will be on probation for five years and is required to pay a \$15,000 fine. Ms. Woods was originally charged with one count of Conducting a Criminal Enterprise, three counts of Public Officer accepting Bribes, three counts of Misconduct in Office and three counts of Forgery.

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Muskegon County DHS director honored

Posted by

[llupo](#) June 03, 2008 21:54PM

Efforts to place family services centers in local schools have garnered the local Department of Human Services director an award from a regional group of school administrators.



Jane Johnson

Jane Johnson, director of the Muskegon County DHS, received the 2008 Champion of Children award from the Michigan Association of School Administrators Region III.

Johnson is credited with establishing Family Resource Centers, which provide families with comprehensive services from local agencies. The centers are in 10 local schools and the goal is to have them in all Muskegon County school districts by the end of next year.

Johnson also is chairwoman of the Muskegon Community Coordinating Council, a local planning group, and the Muskegon Area Children's Agenda, a think tank focused on children's issues.

The school administrators association provides advice and support -- such as legal services, publications, government relations and professional development opportunities -- to top-level school administrators.

The association's Region III serves Muskegon, Ottawa, Newaygo, Oceana, Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm and Osceola counties.

It gives the Champion of Children award annually for dedication to enriching the lives of children and their academic achievement.

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